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A Glance at the Editors

OF THE

NEW ENGLAND

HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL REGISTER,

1847—1879.

JOEL MUNSELL

ON the silver anniversary of my connection with the management of the REGISTER, I pause in my labors to address personally a few words to its readers.

This autumn completes twenty-five years of continuous service as a member of the publishing committee, during nearly eight of which I have been either editor or joint editor of this periodical. All my associates when I commenced serving on this committee, except one, are dead, and the editor at that time has also passed away.

Samuel G. Drake, A.M., then the editor and publisher, had no superior in this country as an antiquary. He had edited four and a half of the eight volumes issued, and had published seven. He afterwards edited five more volumes, and published six more, making nine and a half years of labor as editor and thirteen as publisher. I have already, in the preface to the volume for 1863, in which I gave a history of the REGISTER for the first seventeen years of its existence, referred to his valuable services to this periodical. He did more than any one else to fix the character of its contents. Bestowing much unrequited labor upon it, he assumed the whole pecuniary responsibility in its early days, when it was an experiment, and, though never remunerative, twice resumed it when others gave it up. To him and to Mr. Joel Munsell, of Albany, the REGISTER is much indebted in this respect.

The chairman of the committee to which I was then elected, was the Rev. William Jenks, D.D., LL.D., author of the "Comprehensive Commentary on the Bible," and one of the founders of the American Oriental Society. He was a gentleman of great erudition and particularly versed in biblical lore. He also possessed a taste for genealogy and American history, in both of which he was proficient. He was scrupulously attentive to his duties on the committee. Courtesy and candor were marked characteristics of this venerated man.

Mr. Lemuel Shattuck, another of my associates, was one of the founders of the New England Historic, Genealogical Society, as was also Mr. Drake, the editor, already noticed. His "History of Concord" and his system of family registration show Mr. Shattuck's early interest in local history and genealogy. Few had so clear an idea of the possibilities of genealogy as a science, or did

so much to ensure the preservation of facts, which illustrate vital statistics, or which show the causes of the rise and fall of families.

Mr. William Reed Deane, another member, author of genealogies of the Leonard and Watson families, wielded a ready and graceful pen, and had a peculiar tact in making antiquarian subjects attractive to the general reader. For a series of years he was the Boston correspondent of the *New York Christian Inquirer*. Passages from his letters were seized upon by editors and copied and re-copied into newspapers in every state of the Union.

Mr. David Hamblen, another member, had a genuine love for genealogical pursuits, and collected much matter concerning his own family and the genealogy of the towns on Cape Cod. He also rendered much service to the society by his business talents.

Mr. Frederic Kidder, author of the "History of New Ipswich," the sole survivor of my first associates on the committee, developed early a taste for historical subjects. He has been a keen observer of men and events. Much has been done by him to advance the prosperity of the REGISTER and of the society, and to rescue from oblivion the fast perishing records of early New England life.

My subsequent associates have been the Rev. Alonzo H. Quint, D.D., Mr. James Spear Loring, the Hon. Francis Brinley, Mr. Charles H. Morse, William H. Whitmore, A.M., the Hon. Timothy Farrar, LL.D., Mr. William B. Trask, the Hon. Charles Hudson, the Rev. Elias Nason, Mr. George W. Chase, William S. Appleton, A.M., the Rev. Henry M. Dexter, D.D., William B. Towne, A.M., Albert H. Hoyt, A.M., Charles W. Tuttle, A.M., Rear Adm. George Henry Preble, U.S.N., the Rev. Lucius R. Paige, D.D., Mr. Henry H. Edes, Jeremiah Colburn, A.M., Henry F. Waters, A.B., and the Rev. Edmund F. Slafter, A.M. All of these have been contributors to the REGISTER, and some have edited it. The mere recital of these names is sufficient to show what learning and talent have aided in conducting the REGISTER.

Having paid a tribute to my associates of the publishing committee, I will now speak briefly of the several editors of the REGISTER. In the course of the thirty-three years during which this work has been published there have been twelve editors, namely, Messrs. Cogswell, Drake, Harris, Shurtleff, Felt, Farrar, Trask, Whitmore, Nason, Hudson, Hoyt, and the present writer. Just one half of these, the first six in order of service, are dead, while the last six survive.

The Rev. William Cogswell, D.D., the first editor, had charge of the REGISTER one year. He had edited the "American Quarterly Register" and the "New Hampshire Repository," periodicals largely devoted to antiquarian matters. He was an industrious and painstaking writer, and was versed in the history and antiquities of New England, being particularly familiar with the biography of its ministers.

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Samuel Gardner Drake, A.M., author of the "History of Boston" and the "Book of the Indians," who succeeded Dr. Cogswell, has already been noticed.

The next editor was William Thaddeus Harris, A.M., LL.B., editor of Hubbard's "History of New England." He inherited from his father and grandfather a love for New England history, of which he acquired an accurate and extensive knowledge. He was carefully exact to the minutest detail. His early death was a loss to historical literature.

The Hon. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, M.D., author of a "Topographical and Historical Description of Boston," was one of the first to be consulted in matters relating to the topography of Boston; and also in regard to the Mayflower Pilgrims and their descendants, and other old colony families.

The Rev. Joseph B. Felt, LL.D., author of the "Ecclesiastical History of New England" and of histories of Salem and Ipswich, had a profound reverence for the character of the New England Puritans and an intimate knowledge of their history. He labored assiduously to collect the scattered memorials of their lives and embalm them in the pages of his books.

The Hon. Timothy Farrar, LL.D., author of the "Manual of the Constitution," to a legal training and knowledge added an intimate acquaintance with New England biography and local history, particularly of New Hampshire, his native state.

This closes the list of editors to July, 1852. None of them survive.

Mr. William Blake Trask has the precedence in order of time among the ~~living~~ editors of the REGISTER, having edited the number for October, 1852. He is one of our most thorough and careful antiquaries, familiar with the history of the settlers of New England, and an authority in decyphering the peculiar chirography of their times. Every volume of this periodical, except the first, has, I think, contributions from his pen. The work is greatly indebted to him. He has been editor or joint editor of four volumes.

William Henry Whitmore, A.M., author of "Elements of Heraldry" and the "American Genealogist," has published much on the subject to which the REGISTER is devoted. I know of no one in this country who is so thorough a student of Heraldry, or better informed in regard to English and American family history. He has contributed numerous articles to this work.

The Rev. Elias Nason, A.M., whose biographies of Sumner, Wilson, Mrs. Rowson, and other celebrities, have charmed and instructed many readers, and whose eloquence on the platform and in the pulpit has often been heard, edited the work for more than two years. His scholarship and varied talents, joined to great enthusiasm, have left their impress on the pages of the REGISTER. Mr. Nason has studied the history of the people of New England,



their manners and customs, and the lives of their representative men. Of the early history of sacred and popular music here, he has made a special study.

The Hon. Charles Hudson, A.M., after a faithful ministry in early manhood and a successful political career in maturer years, has spent the evening of his life in antiquarian pursuits. As the historian of Lexington and Marlborough he will long be remembered.

My immediate predecessor, Col. Albert H. Hoyt, edited the REGISTER for eight years, the longest continuous term of any editor. Though this periodical consists largely of records and documents which have attractions chiefly for the antiquary or the genealogist, his fine literary taste and classical attainments gave to his biographical and historical articles and his notices of books graces that won the attention of the literary reader. His taste also led him to pay particular attention to the dress and typographical appearance of the REGISTER. I had opportunities for knowing the labor which he bestowed upon the several numbers as they passed through the press, and the conscientious manner in which he performed all his editorial work. He suffered no doubtful statement to appear without the closest scrutiny. None of his predecessors had less assistance from others in the discharge of his duties; and the eight volumes which he edited will certainly rank as high as any equal number of volumes of the work. They are a monument to his industry, learning and skill.

These are the men who have edited the REGISTER. Their labor and that of a host of able contributors have made its thirty-three volumes a storehouse of original authorities in history, filling its pages with important materials not elsewhere to be found, so that the work is a necessity in every historical library, and sets are sold at a large advance upon the cost to subscribers. I know of no other periodical of which a single volume has brought so high a price.

I think I am warranted in assuming that the work is now on a sure foundation. A quarter of a century ago, however, when I became a member of the publishing committee, we could not have spoken so confidently. Though eight years of trial had then passed, the difficulties which the REGISTER had encountered were so many that, among its friends, none but the most sanguine had perfect faith in its success.

The prospect before us is encouraging. Much gratuitous labor must be performed in the future, as it has been in the past, to ensure a continuance of success. But that persons will be found to perform that labor when those who now give their time to it are taken away, I have full faith.

JOHN WARD DEAN.

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